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Balachandra, Thambirajah (JUS)

From: Marc Del Bigio [delbigio@cc.umanitoba.ca]
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2009 4:41 PM
To: Postl, Brian (WRHA); Balachandra, Thambirajah (JUS)
Subject: Sinclair Inquiry

Dear Drs. Postl and Balachandra,

I appreciate your handling of this matter in the face of extreme public scrutiny. I did the neuropathology autopsy examination of Mr. Sinclair and reviewed all of his hospital records in detail (back to his teenage years), and I feel capable of making a few observations. There is no question something went amiss at HSC Emergency and perhaps also with WRHA communications to the public. However, there are two other issues:

1. Dr. Balachandra is quoted in the Free Press (Sept 25 2008) as saying that "the family physician who sent the man to the ER by taxi acted appropriately". I strongly disagree with that conclusion. Mr.

Sinclair was declared mentally incompetent years earlier. My examination showed severe solvent leukoencephalopathy, which would be associated with a subcortical dementia. His sepsis would have further impaired his cognitive function. Having witnessed dementing illness in both of my grandfathers, I can assure you that a demented individual should not be sent by taxicab unaccompanied to hospital and be expected to successfully navigate the admission process.

2. The matter has become highly politicized. (e.g. Staff Writer, Winnipeg Free Press, 25/09/2008 "Inquest into Winnipeg ER death must look at how First Nations treated"; Chinta Puxley, THE CANADIAN PRESS

4/02/2009 "Some aboriginal organizations also want the inquest to look at how First Nations people are treated in the health-care system.").

~~We should not lose sight of the fact that this man's problems were self-inflicted. His cognitive disability and neurogenic bladder were the consequence of decades of solvent / inhalant abuse.~~ Societal blame can only go so far. At some level individuals must accept responsibility.

I will not make these comments public, but I think that the two issues must be discussed in the inquiry. The HSC is not solely responsible for this man's death.

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